DEPARTMENT OF STATE

SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY

June 25, 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR: ARA - Mr. Holland

Re: Congressional Reaction on the Guatemalan Situation

KEYSER

David Keyer, who is Congressman Kersten's Executive Assistant, came in to see me on Wednesday, June 23. He accompanied Congressman Hillings on the latter's recent excursion to your area.

He presented to me the attached memorandum and the other material which I enclose herewith. The gist of it is belaboring us for not taking more direct action in Guatemala. Keyser's line of thought seems to be that under the so-called "liberation" policy we should be in a position to help incipient revolutions wherever and whenever they occur, and that if we take a strictly neutral position in the Guatemalan matter it will have a very drastic effect on our psychological position vis-a-vis the Iron Curtain countries. Keyser intimated that his boss, Congressman Kersten, who is presently abroad but will be back July first, has very strong feelings in the matter and would probably interest himself in it after he got back.

I am sure that you are aware of this line of thinking which I suspect is held by a number of other Congressmen. I pass it along to you simply for your information.

R. L. O'Connor

Attachments

cc: H - Mr. Morton

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June 23, 1954

Memo on Guatemala

The Guatemala uprising is of highest importance in that it is a critical test of U. S. policy.

The basic question confronting the United States is: If and when any people rise up in revolt against their Communist oppressors, will the U. S. come to their assistance, or will it not?

After striping away all the legalistic folderol of the U.N., the use, "intervention" or "non-intervention", "world opinion", etc., the United States must answer this question. And the United States cannot escape into a pious neutrality by claiming it must follow determinations of the UN, the OAS or other body. The U. S. is a competent sovereign nation responsible for its own actions.

Three U. S. mistakes over the past few days are cause for alarm:

1. The U. S. vote in U.N. in favor of a cease fire in Guatemala. (This could only help the Communist government, not the patriotic revolters)

2. U. S. statement that it had not armed the rebels and had no intention of supplying them. (This would discourage the Guatemalan army and other Guatemalans from going over to the rebel side. Silence or "prove it" statement would have been better.

3. Statement of Ambassador Lodge that "many persons will wonder whether the whole imbroglio in Guatemala was not cooked up precisely for the purpose of making Communist propaganda here in the United Nations." (This is fantastic; surely Lodge must be better informed as to the facts than this. What must be the reaction of the rebels who are risking their lives!)

Arguments for U. S. action in behalf of the rebels:

Moral: Are we to make no distinction between Communists and anti-Communists? Surely the Guatemalans have a right to revolt against Communist tyranny, and therefore we have the right to help them.

We pride ourselves on our "Good Neighbor" policy in Latin-America. Our Guatemalan friends have fallen among Communist thieves. "Who was neighbor to him who fell among thieves." The Pharisee who passed him by.

Legal: The Soviet Union has already violently intervened in the internal affairs of Guatemala by seizing a tight grip on it. Helping the Guatemalan people throw out the Communists would be a vindication of the policy of non-intervention, not a new

intervention.

According to some legal theorists once a man was thrown out of his home by a burglar, no one could help him regain possession.

Political: If the present uprising is quelled by the Communist government, U. S. prestige in the world will drop sharply. If we appear unwilling to take a positive hand in matters which vitally affect us near our own shores, can anyone be confident that we would ever be serious about defending Southeast Asia or other remote areas of the globe.

Psychological: We have shed copious tears for the captive peoples. If we refuse to help patriotic people in revolt against Communist tyranny in an area where we can command the situation, and where the Soviets cannot effectively render aid, could anyone believe that we would ever help the Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Chinese or others who might want to revolt. We missed one opportunity in East Germany in 1953, but even there the Soviet Army was close behind. But what excuse can we offer for not helping the Guatemalans?

Great Danger If We Fail to Render Aid to Revolting Guatemalans:

History is bound to march in one of the following directions:

1. Continued conflict with Soviets climaxed by all-out hydrogen warfare.

2. Perpetual half-slave, half-free world. (Highly unlikely, crisis more likely.)

3. Change of heart of Soviet leaders. (Highly speculative; not to be counted on as a guide to U. S. policy. Leaders are virtually slaves to the Gargantuan monstrosity they have created.)

4. Uprisings by the enslaved peoples themselves.

If we fail to render help to the Guatemalan uprising now, there will virtually never be another chance, since it is most unlikely that a revolution can succeed in this 20th century without some outside aid. And if we demonstrate by our inaction that we intend not to help any revolters against Communist tyranny, the likelihood of any revolt is diminished to almost zero.

That leaves only hydrogen warfare as our ultimate fate. Revolts happen spontaneously, as this one did; hence we can never excuse ourselves that we were not ready for it. We must make ourselves ready, and seize the situation when it arises. This cannot be beyond American ingenuity.

Aid should be overt:

It could be argued that aid to rebels should be undercover. This may be so. But I believe we should not make any attempt to disguise the fact that we are helping the Guatemalans regain control of their country. This is an honorable act, and it would demonstrate more effectively than any treaties or speeches that we are willing to render practical assistance to people fighting Communism.

Respectfully submitted,

David Kayser

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